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ABSTRACT

This study uses content analysis of "Network East," an ethnic television program aired on British television, to identify the major concerns of the South Asian community in Britain. Most South Asians, comprised of Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Sri Lankans, live in the urban centers of London, Birmingham, Leicester, and Bradford. The following tentative conclusions are reported: (1) "Network East" appears to be a balanced ethnic program for the South Asians in Britain but it is not certain how many non-South Asians watch the program; (2) the program's producers seem to balance positive and negative stories about South Asians in Britain, but the number of the negative outweighs that of the positive; (3) the issues presented on the program appear to represent the concerns of the South Asians in Britain; and (4) the program offerings are designed for second-generation British-born South Asians who are fluent in English and contrast sharply with the British Broadcasting System's (BBC) ethnic programs screened in the 1970s, which emphasized entertainment and music programs, placed a low priority on public affairs, and the language of broadcast was a mix of Hindi/Urdu languages. Statistical data are included on seven tables. A list of 125 references is appended. (FMW)

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SOUTH ASIAN ETHNICS IN BRITAIN AND BBC: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF A TELEVISION PROGRAM

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*A working paper prepared for the 18th Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, Wisconsin, November 2-5, 1989.The content analysis data utilized in this paper were collected between August 1987-July 1988 in Britain. The researcher was on sabbatical leave from Kentucky State University and held a visiting professor position with the European Region Public Administration program of Troy State University during this period. A supplementary travel grant from the faculty research committee of Kentucky State University enabled bibliographic data collection at the Policy Studies Institute and Commission for Racial Equality during the summer of 1989. The author is thankful to the South Asian Center, Cambridge University, for providing access to publications on overseas Indians. Deborah Diersen, a Graduate Assistant in the School of Public Affairs, provided technical assistance in the preparation of this working paper.

I.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic newspaper, televison and radio programs face an interesting dilemma in plural societies.(Smith 1972; Stuart 1986). There is a tendency to highlight the success of the members of the ethnic community. These may include stories about their financial, academic, cultural and professional successes. Stories of this nature project a positive image of the community. On the other hand, these types of news media also report the problems of the community, highlighting individual and collective failures. These failures are attributed to the host communitiy's treatment of the ethnic population such as employment, housing and other types of discrimination.(Pais 1989; McCond 1989).

Several news items about the South Asians in Britain are published in the mainstream newspapers virtually every week. (Times, Independent, Guardian, Telegraph). Some examples of positive stories published between 1987-88 were: financial success of Swaraj Paul, Patels of Britain, a hard-working Bangladeshi student's admission to Oxford, Asian mothers' involvement in their children's schoolwork, Ravi Tikoo's plans to modernize a shipyard in Northern Ireland and the success of Asians in the business and professions. Some of the negative stories involving the South Asians published during the same period were as follows: an Indian surgeon's unethical hard sell of cosmetic surgery, another Asian doctor's involvement in a prescription racket, an Asian labor coucillor's involvement in

racket of twin-track council and the report of a white school teacher suggesting that Asian parents' limited view of education and fear of westernization have handicapped their children's progress in the school system.

Stories that reported discriminatory treatment of the South Asians in Britain by the host community also appeared in the mainstream news media. Some of these were as follows: racial harassment of an Asian family in Hounslow, the Press Council's conclusion that The Sun had published race-biased headlines involving Asians and Blacks, racist estate agents had turned away Asian buyers, Labor Party's rejection of the request for the formation of a Black section proposed by Asian/Black MPs and David Lane's conclusion that racism remains a serious menace in British schools.Keeping a balance between these two types of news items is not easy. How do those who are involved in the production of ethnic news media seek to balance these two sides? Occasionally, those critics outside the media tend to blame the journalistic profession for one or the other.These theoretical concerns have influenced this research about a South Asian television program in Britain.

II.

Theoretical Concerns

The general theoretical concern of this paper is to identify the changing dimensions of South Asian sub-culture in Britain.(Aldrich 1988, Berry 1988, Brah 1985, Goldhill 1988, Helm 1988, Jatla 1989). Although this task is too complex

to be achieved within the framework of this working paper, we might address a series of theoretically interesting questions about the subculture of South Asians in Britain. What types of South Asians live in Britain? What are the major issues in the South Asian communities? What sort of inter-generational variations have appeared within these communities? What sort of relationships have emerged between the South Asians and the Britishers? These are of concern to many social scientists who have studied the South Asian societies overseas.

A large body of literature has already accumulated about the South Asian communities in the United Kingdom. The references included in this working paper are indicative of this literature. Most such literature has been published in Britain. Some of these have also been published in India. The literary works in the form of novels, dramas, poetry and journalistic essays in the English language provide a rich selection of materials for scholars interested in understanding the South Asian communities in Britain. Systematic social scientific studies have also explored the various dimensions of the matrices of South Asian sub-culture there. Research reported in this working paper is a small contribution to the understanding of South Asian sub-culture in Britain through the content analysis of an ethnic television program which was started during the summer of 1987. The methodology used in this research is

content analysis which been accepted as a standard technique utilized by communication researchers who have focused their attention on printed media, radio and television programs.(Babbie, 1989). The methodological limitations of content analysis are well known. The primary concern of the research reported in this paper is twofold. The first concern is methodological. It seeks to utilize content analytic data for studying an aspect of the South Asian societies in Britain. Content analysis of an ethnic television program aired by the BBC provides such methodological base. The second concern is theoretical. The study seeks to identify the major concerns of the South Asian community in contemporary Britain. This theoretical concern emerges from the changing nature of the South Asian communities in Britain.

III.

SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITIES IN BRITAIN: A STATISTICAL PROFILE

Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans constitute the South Asian population of Britain. In addition, the South Asians of East African origin are also included within this population. A 1981 census by the British government estimated the population distribution of Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and East African South Asians as indicated below. Most South Asians in Britain live in the large metropolitan areas of London, Birmingham, Leicester, and Bradford.

Table No. 1
South Asian Population
in
Britain Based on 1981 Census Data

Birth Criteria	India	Bangladesh	Pakistan	South Asians East Africa
Born in Britain	261,206	16,939	118,252	48,673
Born Outside Britain	412,498	47,622	177,209	132,648
Total	673,704	64,561	295,461	181,321

Source: Commission for Racial Equality
Ethnic Minorities in Britain
Statistical Information on the
Pattern of Settlement
(London: CRE, 1985)

* A 1988 estimate suggests population distribution as follows: Indians 760,000; Pakistanis 397,000; Bangladeshis 103,000. (Roy 1988).

The orientations of the host community toward the South Asians is rather varied. The data from two national surveys shown below is indicative of such orientations.

Table No. 2
ATTITUDES TOWARD SOUTH
ASIAN IMMIGRANTS

Survey Items	Responses in Percentages
Should Britain allow more or less settlement of the following four groups of people from foreign countries?	Percentage saying less settlement
a) People from Common Market	42%
b) Australians	25%
c) West Indians	62%
d) Indians and Pakistanis	67%

Source: Roger Jowell et al.
British Social Attitudes: The 1984 Responses
(Brookfield: Grower, 1985) pp. 26-27.

The attitudes of the host community toward the education of the South Asian children are reflected in the data presented in

Table No. 3
PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD
MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Survey Items	Percentage Agreeing	
	1983	1987
The immigrant children be allowed to study their mother tongue in school hours	16%	17%
The immigrant children be allowed separate religious instructors in school	32%	37%
The immigrant children be taught history and culture of their country of origin	40%	40%
The immigrant children be allowed to wear traditional dress in school	43%	45%
The immigrant children be provided with special classes in English	74%	75%

Source: Roger Jowell et al.
British Social Attitudes The Fifth Report
(Brookfield: Grower, 1989) pp. 26-27.

The South Asian ethnic newspapers are an excellent source of information about the communities. Table No. 4 lists the major South Asian printed media.

Table No. 4
ASIAN ETHNIC PRESS
IN
BRITAIN

Bengali	English	Gujrati
Weekly	Weekly	Weekly
Surma	Asian Herald	Garri Gujrat
Notun Din	Asian Times	Guj. Samachar
Janomat	Eastern Tribune	
Jagaron	India Weekly	Others
	India Times	Vishwasharma
Others	New Life	Asian Trader
Angikar	New Voice	
Desh Barta	Shakti	
Nari Sangham	Sikh Courier	
Prabashi		
Sagar		
Shetu-Bondha		

Hindi	Punjabi	URDU	Other
Weekly	Weekly	Weekly	
Amar Deep	Des Pardes	Daily Jang	Tamil
Hindi Samachar	Punjab Times	Khyber	London
Naveen	Sher Punjab	Milap	Murasu
Shaki	Punjab	Ravi	Telyr
		Auhbar-E Batan	Telesu
			Talli
		Shafaq	

The South Asians have acquired some political mobility as shown in Table No. 5 showing the councillors of London boroughs.

Table No. 5
ASIAN COUNCILLORS IN
LONDON BOROUGHS: 1987

Types of Asians	Party Labor	Lib/SDP	Conservative	Total
Male	60	0	2	62
Female	3	2	0	5
Total	63	2	2	67

SOURCE: Commission for Racial Equality
Working paper titled "Ethnic Minority Councillors Elected to London Borough Councils", 1987.

IV.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Considering the theoretical focus discussed in the previous section, this research will seek to answer the following questions about an ethnic television program for the South Asians in Britain.

1) What are the thematic contents of this television program?

2) How are the negative and positive stories about the South Asians in Britain balanced in this program?

3) What is the general role of this South Asian ethnic television program in Britain?

4) What sort of specific issues are emerging among the South Asian communities of Britain?

5) To what extent are these issues reflected in the ethnic television programs of the BBC?

V.

Data Sources:

This research is primarily a methodological exploration. It seeks to use the contents of an ethnic television program as a data source for social research on South Asians in Britain. Researchers using content analytical techniques have used textbooks, newspapers, radio programs and television programs as material suitable for content analysis.

Although the South Asians in Britain have seen and heard ethnic TV/radio programs for a long time, the BBC started a new program billed as "Network East" in the summer of 1987. This program addressed the needs of British-born young South Asians unlike the earlier programs. Between September 19, 1987 and January 6, 1988 a total of fifteen sessions of Network East were content analyzed. The program was off the air during the Christmas season of 1987. In the summer of 1988, Network East had dropped the Public Affairs format and shown a popular Indian television serial - "SRIKANT". The analysis presented herein is based upon data obtained from fifteen sessions of Network East involving Public Affairs programming for the South Asians. Network East is produced by the BBC's Birmingham studio. The production staff is headed by Narendra Minhas. Two presenters on the screen during the last part of 1987 were Valeria Vaz and Samantha Mia. These two persons were replaced under controversial circumstances. The 1988 program presenters were Sahnab Paknawaz and Sudha Kumari.

It is important to recognize that BBC's "Network East" is not the only public affairs program for the South Asian communities in Britain. A number of BBC radio stations also air radio programs for the South Asian communities. Some of these include Cambridge, Oxford and some other English cities. Most of these broadcasts tend to be about an hour's duration. Their contents are a mix of entertainment and public affairs programs.

VI.

DATA ANALYSIS

Between September 19, 1987 and January 30, 1988 a total of sixteen programs were shown on Network East. All these programs were then content analyzed to identify the thematic contents of all stories that related to the South Asian population within Britain. Network East did have news items about India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Such items highlighted the salient news items of the week. During the period under review, it also screened news items about Fiji, Morocco, and the United States. For the purpose of this paper items unrelated to the South Asian population in Britain were not content analyzed.

Table No. 6 presents a thematic content analysis of all items relating to South Asians in Britain screened on Network East during this period.

Table No. 6
SELECTED STORIES
ON NETWORK EAST ABOUT
SOUTH ASIANS IN BRITAIN
(1987-88)

Broadcast Date	Item	Slant
I.		
Sept. 19, 1987	Asian Elderly	Positive: Asian elderly are organizing self-help groups to help themselves
Sept. 19, 1987	Asian youth boxing success	Positive: A number of Asian youth in Southall are promoting boxing among Asians
Sept. 19, 1987	Asian MP Keith Vaz helps an Indian woman with immigration problem	Mixed: Immigration authorities were callous toward problems of an Indian woman, but an Indian MP helps her
Sept. 19, 1987	Asian youth promote Bhangra disco	Positive: Asian youth have modernized traditional Bhangra dance with disco music
II.		
Sept. 26, 1987	Genetic finger printing	Mixed: Asians are using expensive genetic finger printing as evidence for sponsoring relatives for immigration.
Sept. 26, 1987	Compensation for Asian shopkeepers affected by Birmingham Riot of 1985	Negative: Compensation for shopkeepers was inadequate
III.		
Oct. 3, 1987	Discussion on CRE Report titled: "Living in Terror"	Negative: Stories of racial harassment in council houses

IV. Oct. 18, 1987	Asian runaways	Negative: Asian children running away from an authoritarian family
V. Oct. 24, 1987	Black section in Labor party	Mixed: Pros and cons of having a Black section in Labor party discussed with Keith Vaz, Paul Sharma and Narendra Mahhijani
VI. Nov. 1, 1987	Sexual abuse within Asian families	Negative: Asian children being sexually abused by parents and relatives
VII. Nov. 7, 1987	Alcohol abuse among Asians	Negative: Young Asians becoming alcoholics
VIII. Nov. 14, 1987	Hotel London	Negative: Asian families are being housed in bed and breakfast inns due to discriminatory housing allocation policies
IX. Nov. 21, 1987	Discussion on new immigration bill	Negative: Discriminatory immigration bill would make it harder for Asian families to migrate to UK.
X. Nov. 28, 1987	Successful Asian fashion designer	Positive: Interview with Trisha Lakhani Reflects success story of an Asian woman in business

XI.		
Jan. 6, 1988	Spiritual rebirth of Sikh youth	Negative: Aimlessness of Western lifestyle resulting in a return to religion
XII.		
Jan. 23, 1988	Dowry abuse in Asian community involving arranged marriages	Negative: Options for Asian women are still limited
XIII.		
Jan. 30, 1988	Immigration restriction	Negative: Discriminatory public policy in relation to South Asians sponsoring their relatives for immigration.

The Table No. 6 shows the outcome of thematic analysis of stories aired on "Network East" during the period of study. It highlights public policy issues such as immigration restriction, racial harassment, political access, ethnic clarification and homelessness. It also identifies special issues relating to the elderly, women, youth and children. They are indicative of the nature of issues in the South Asian communities of Britain.

Table No. 7 has attempted to categorize the various issues about the South Asian communities in Britain that have emerged through the content analysis of the stories on Network East. This is not an exhaustive list of all issues that are associated with the Asian communities. A comparison of the news items published in the mainstream newspapers, Asian newspapers and then items that have been identified through content analysis would indicate the relative weightage given to the news items by the three different types of news media.

TABLE No. 7
ISSUES RELATING TO
SOUTH ASIAN SUB-CULTURES
OF BRITAIN: A THEMATIC CONTENT ANALYSIS

Elderly
Loneliness in Inner Cities
Social Security

Public Policy
Factionalism
Racial Harassment
Homelessness
Immigration Restriction
Political Access
Asian or Black

Youth
Alcoholism
Arranged Marriages
Identity
Religion
Sikh Revivalism
Asian Yuppies
Outlet for Talents
Employment Discrimination

Children
Sexual Abuse
Education

Asian Women
Spouse Abuse
Immigration
Dowry Abuse
Marriage
Employment

CONCLUSIONS

Considering our specific research concerns in this paper what conclusion can we derive from the content analysis data presented herein? A number of tentative conclusion have been derived.

1) First, it appears that "Network East" is a balanced ethnic TV program for the South Asians living in Britain. We are unsure about the extent to which it is watched by the non-South Asian population of Britain.
2) Second, the program's producers seem to balance between the positive and negative stories about the South Asians in Britain. But the negative stories outweigh the positive ones.
3) The thematic content analysis has identified a number of issues in the South Asian subcultures of Britain. These issues seem to be representative of the issues involving the South Asian ethnic population of Britain.
4) Network East's program offerings stand in sharp contrast with BBC's ethnic programs screened in the seventies which emphasized entertainment and music programs. The public affairs component had a low priority, and the language of broadcast was a mix of Hindi/Urdu languages. Network East is designed for the second generation British-born South Asians who are fluent in the English language. South Asian radio and television programs of Britain are an excellent documentary data source for researchers.

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